TAGA plus

sports business lifestyle

JUL/AUG/SEPT2021

SIX ADVENTURES TO HAVE ON ROTA

Q&A: Ron Snyder

Saipan's fastest man on two wheels

NMI Museum: It's not just for tourists, you know

Anatomy of a newsmaker

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More than a year into this COVID-19 pandemic and we're all stir-crazy. Cabin fever is real, folks. The trial has been particularly hard for those with wanderlust in their blood who always hear the siren call of new places and adventures, for those who long to be with far-off relatives and families, and are fed up to their gills with the four corners of their homes or offices. The CNMI is paradise, true, but enforced confinement—like what we're doing due to the pandemic—quickly turns paradise into a four-cornered prison and going to work becomes as charming as taking a walk in a prison yard.

Despair not, though, as Lindsay Nash brings us to Rota in this edition of TAGA *Plus*. Since domestic travel is an option we can take, she makes a good point that now is a good time to explore our own backyard. And what more perfect place to do that than in nature's own Treasure Island? In this edition of the magazine, Lindsay enumerates at least six adventures you can have on Rota. That should already be enough for a short weekend hop to the CNMI's southernmost island. Stay longer and have even more adventures!

Another must-visit for many islanders is the NMI Museum in Garapan. I must confess, though. I have been living in the CNMI for more than 20 years already but I never had the chance to check out the museum. I have absolutely no excuse. It is high time that I put that on my must-do list this year. Thank goodness they have a well-informed docent, Archie, who can show me around. You don't even have to be part of a tour group to check out the site!

I hope you enjoy reading this latest issue of the magazine. We welcome suggestions, criticisms, feedback, and complaints. Just email them to editor@saipantribune.com and we'll go from there.

Sinseramente,

Jayvee Vallejera
Editor

COVER ART

The island of Rota is the ideal place to slow down, sit back, and soak up the simple beauty of nature. And sunset is always worth catching, like here at Tweksberry Beach.

Photo by **WHIT ALTIZER**

TAGA plus

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BEACABRERA

Bea Cabrera is a correspondent for *Saipan Tribune* and TAGA *Plus*. She has tried to grow vegetables in her yard like tomatoes and peppers, only to end up heartbroken and thinking she doesn't have the knack for it or a green thumb. She found hope when she came across a process called "hydrophonics" where you can grow vegetables in water without soil that is advocated by the Cooperative Research Extension and Education Services of the Northern Marianas College. Her article, "Grow vegetables. Raise fish. Do both," aims to give hope to readers who want to be self-sufficient, lessen import dependency and realize that a green thumb does not always have to be innate, but can be nurtured and developed. Contact Bea at beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com.

KIMBERLY B.ESMORES

Kimberly Bautista Esmores is a proud survivor of muriatic acid inhalation. To this day, she vows to never clean another bathroom if she can help it. Kimberly is also *Saipan Tribune*'s court and crime reporter and loves salacious stories—the more explicit, the better. Contact her at kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com.

IVAMAURIN

Iva studied journalism in college—from writing to editing, graphics to layouting—but didn't really see herself as a "news person" until her move to Saipan, almost 20 years since graduating. Her stint as an island reporter led her to one of the brilliant minds she has ever met, Thomas Manglona II. In this issue of TAGA *Plus*, she tells his story. As early as grade school, Thomas already knew he wanted to be a journalist. Iva hopes that, like Thomas, more young people would want to be truth seekers, and help share what beautiful news the CNMI is to the world. Contact Iva at ivamaurin@gmail.com.

ROSELYNMONROYO

Roselyn had a shot at an athletic scholarship in college, but the "sports universe" had other plans for her—be a writer and report sports stories. She gets to enjoy watching games and earn a living from doing it. The "sports universe" has been very generous to her. Contact Roselyn at roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com.

LINDSAYNASH

Lindsay Nash is a writer and photographer on Saipan. When faced with another summer without international travel, she faced her fear of flying on small airplanes and booked a trip to Rota. The flights were fine and Rota was even finer, which is why she insisted on sharing it in this issue. Email her at lindsayinsaipan@gmail.com.

MARKRABAGO

Mark learned to ride a bicycle near the Cultural Center of the Philippines in the mid-'80s. Long before mountain bikes were a fad, he already assembled one and was using it to go on errands around his neighborhood in Manila. Like Dr. Ron Snyder, Mark also runs occasionally with his 6-year-old Havanese, Memo.

JOSHUASANTOS

Along with being a watch enthusiast and pretending to be good at video games, cooking, and golf from time to time, Josh is *Saipan Tribune*'s newest reporter. During the week, he can be found at the *Saipan Tribune* office writing, or out in the community looking for stories and occasionally taking awesome photos for the front page. Reach out to him at joshua_santos@saipantribune.com or @rarebasedjosh on all socials.

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FEEDBACK METER

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Suggestions, criticism, corrections, and wild overreactions are welcome. By all means, send them to us and we will find space for them. Letters consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. So, please, no novellas.

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Hot pepper flakes add zesty punch to sweet, spicy tuna dish

LINDAGASSENHEIMER
Tribune News Service

LINDA GASSENHEIMER/TNS

Sweet and spicy tuna.

Fresh tuna is coated with a sweet and spicy sauce for this quick summer supper. Vinegar sweetened with a little sugar, raisins, capers and sweet red onions is the base of the sauce. Hot pepper flakes add a zesty punch.

Frozen peas are used in the brown rice side dish. They can be quickly defrosted in the microwave for one minute or in a bowl of warm water for a minute.

Sweet and Spicy Tuna

- 3/4 pound fresh tuna steak, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 cup sliced red onion
- 3 tablespoons raisins
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons capers
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons fresh mint torn into small pieces

Cut tuna into 1-inch pieces. Heat canola oil in a non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tuna and sauté 2 minutes, stirring the pieces. Turn tuna over and sauté another minute. Remove tuna to a plate and set aside. Add the onion to the skillet and sauté 3 minutes. Stir in the raisins, pepper flakes and sugar. Add the vinegar and water. Simmer stirring often until syrupy, about 1 minute. Return tuna to the skillet and add the capers. Toss the ingredients together. Add salt and pepper to taste. Divide between two dinner plates and sprinkle mint on top.

Yield 2 servings.

PER SERVING: 338 calories (23% from fat), 8.7 g fat (1 g saturated, 4.6 g monounsaturated), 78 mg cholesterol, 41.3 g protein, 21.8 g carbohydrates, 2.3 g fiber, 270 mg sodium.

Brown Rice and Peas

- 1 package microwave brown rice (1 1/2 cups cooked)
- 1 cup frozen peas, defrosted
- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Microwave rice according to package instructions. Measure 1 1/2 cups rice into a mixing bowl and reserve remaining rice for another time. Add the peas, oil and salt and pepper to taste. Toss well.

Yield 2 servings.

PER SERVING: 256 calories (22% from fat), 6.2 g fat (0.8 g saturated, 3.4 g monounsaturated), no cholesterol, 6.2 g protein, 43.9 g carbohydrates, 4.7 g fiber, 9 mg sodium.

HELPFUL HINTS

- You can use any type of onion.
- You can use several drops of hot pepper sauce instead of hot pepper flakes.
- You can use red wine vinegar instead of balsamic vinegar.

Countdown:

- Defrost peas and set aside.
- Prepare remaining ingredients.
- Make tuna dish.
- Make rice.

SHOPPING LIST

To buy:
3/4 fresh tuna steak
1 red onion
1 box raisins
1 bottle red pepper flakes
1 bottle balsamic vinegar
1 jar capers
1 bunch fresh mint
1 package microwaveable brown rice
1 container frozen peas

STAPLES: canola oil, sugar, salt and black peppercorns

Linda Gassenheimer is the author o f over 30 cookbooks, including her newest, The 12-Week Diabetes Cookbook. *Listen to Linda on www.WDNA.org and all major podcast sites. Email her at Linda@DinnerInMinutes.com.)*

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LOCATION FLEXIBILITY. Is working from home three days a week ideal for your lifestyle? Or attending the 8:30am meeting via Zoom? Or flextime? Or winters in Montana? Prepare to ask. "You need to be really clear on what it is that you want, and come in and make a business case for it," says corporate parenting consultant Daisy Dowling, author of *Workparent: The Complete Guide to Succeeding on the Job, Staying True to Yourself, and Raising Happy Kids*. Explain why the flexibility makes you more productive, and also works for your role and team. "There's no conceivable time in your career that will be a better time to ask. Everything has been thrown up in the air, and the proof of concept that people can work on their own time has never been more loudly on display," she says.

EXPANSIVE CHILDCARE OPTIONS. Parents are not only exhausted, but are also dragging a year's worth of house projects and car registration renewals behind them. (This writer's tags expired in May 2020.) Both subsidized workday and off-hours options are reasonable—parents love a weekday afternoon off. Rue Dooley, the longtime knowledge advisor for the Society for Human Resources Management, says that childcare can come in many forms, including contracts with external childcare centers, nanny services, backup providers or learning pod companies, as well as on-site.

Career sweeteners to look for in your next job

ARIANNECOHEN
Rate.com

These are dramatic times to be navigating a career: Managers are myopically focused on getting workers back on site, organizational finances are either fine or disastrous, and everyone's running on fumes. Yet despite the choppy waters, this is a golden moment to look for a new role, either within your organization or elsewhere. According to a new survey from Ladders Inc., more six-figure jobs are available now than before the pandemic, as companies are catching up on hiring.

If you're among the 41% to 46% of global employees considering a career pivot or jump to a new employer, know that the old metrics like salary, benefits and title are not enough in these pandemic times. You need to look for these supports to sanely get you through the grind.

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TAGAPLUS

VACATION TIME. Ask how many days employees at your level actually use per year. It's a red flag if the answer for 2020 is low. "In the most intense, isolating time of most people's lives, many people took, say, 11 vacation days when they could have had 20. That's really concerning, because it means that people are more burned out than they need to be," Dowling says. You want to work for leaders who talk about the importance of pacing and self-care, and, critically, take all allotted vacation days themselves. Otherwise you'll be working as many days as they do.

A REASON TO BE IN-HOUSE. Organizations are scrambling to lure work-from-homers back on site. "There has to be a hook to keep people, and I think organizations have to figure out both broad-scale and individually what that is," Dowling says. "If the reward is to return to an office that people might not want to be in and keep on working and working, that's not compelling." You're valuable; make 'em work to keep you.

MONEY IN YOUR POCKET. Cash talks. Verbosely. "We all need a pat on the back once in a while, and money does that in our society. It helps people feel appreciated," Dooley says. Creative organizations put extra greenbacks in your wallet in many ways beyond bonuses, such as paying for perks that they know employees use, like Netflix or pet insurance, as well as WFH gear stipends or meals delivered to doorsteps. If it's a potential new job, you can delicately ask what sorts of pandemic supports and perks have been aimed at workers like you.

CLEAR MILESTONES. What will you be working on for the next six months or year? Right now life is a treadmill, and you'll be happier and more productive with clear waypoints. "Managers and leaders need to create a sense of momentum and achievement," Dowling says. You want to work in a place where managers celebrate successful quotas, applaud milestones and show teams how their work bolsters larger successes.

DREAMSTIME/TNS

Some companies have become more accommodating of flexible work schedules and permanent remote work. The tricky bit is that the arrangements are often up to employees and prospective employees to negotiate.

RON SNYDER

Ron Snyder, the middle- and long-distance coach of Northern Marianas Athletics, is a lifelong runner.

Originally from Auburn, New York, he first came to Saipan in 1996 as a sixth-grade teacher at Tanapag Elementary School and it's on the island where he met his wife, Kim. They left in 2000, moving to Venezuela and from there also worked in Alaska, Slovakia, Ukraine, Malta, and Ethiopia. He returned to the CNMI when he was offered the headmaster job at Saipan International School in 2016, which is incidentally 20 years after he first came to the island.

The Snyders are blessed with two daughters—Remi and Anika. The family also has a dog named Gilligan.

TAGA *Plus* caught up with Snyder recently and he's the focus of this issue's Q&A.

MARKRABAGO
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TAGA *Plus* Associate Editor

When did you get started in track and why?
My favorite part of athletics is cross country. I started running cross country and track in my freshman year of high school and really like the freedom of running on back roads, on trails, along the beach path, etc. It is a great way of seeing how beautiful the world is while exercising.

Why do you still run masters races today?
I have been coaching for years but last year NMA sponsored me for a trip to New Zealand to train as a Level 3 middle/long distance. Not only did I learn a tremendous amount, I met some amazing coaches and athletes who inspired me to get back into running beyond a hobby. I am working on building my aerobic base so that I can introduce more speed into my sessions. This will let me join in with more of our Run Saipan events and practices.

What fulfillment do you get from running?
For me running is social. Even though I run mostly with my dog now, I love being part of a team, discussing different topics and just logging the miles while experiencing the scenery.

What's your favorite running path on Saipan?
My favorite is probably Banzai Cliff, through the jungle, along the road and back to Banzai Cliff. This four-mile stretch has light hills, a nice jungle path, beautiful views of both the sea and Suicide Cliff and is safe enough to run with my dog off-leash.

Do you run in the morning, afternoon, or evening?
On Saipan, I prefer to run in the evening. The temperature is cooler and I find it a great release after a stressful day.

What's your pre-run snack? What do you drink to hydrate yourself?
I don't really have a pre-run snack. For early morning runs, I try to have a banana to put a bit in my stomach but not much else. I really only drink water to hydrate during runs. Water is great, the body processes it easily and is about all you need unless the distances are really long.

Do you run with gadgets? Why and why not? What's your favorite running shoes and apparel?

I run with a Huawei GT 2E. The Huawei Health App is amazing and I really like the way it tracks VO2 Max, stride. and pace. Plus, the GT2E has a virtual companion who paces me during runs. It is quite motivating to hear, "You have passed your virtual companion." My favorite running shoe currently is the New Balance 1080 Fresh Foam. It has an 8mm heel drop to protect my old Achilles and the upper is form-fitting like a sock. For favorite apparel, my Run Saipan or SIS shirts. Both are made by Run Guam, are really high quality and great looking.

Any advice to master athletes who want to take up running?

I would advise anyone at the masters level to pick a sport and get started and would definitely invite you to join our Run Saipan practices and monthly 5Ks. Movement is an important part of our health, especially as we get older. But…start slow, plan rests, and take injuries seriously.

Grow vegetables. Raise fish. Do both!

BEA CABRERA

BEACABRERA
beecabbie@gmail.com
TAGA *Plus* Contributing Writer

The Cooperative Research, Extension, and Education Services of the Northern Marianas College is currently growing cucumber and tomatoes through hydrophonics. Growth is exponential when vegetables and fruit plants are gown hydrophonically.

Have you tried growing vegetables or fruit plants in your own backyard, watched countless YouTube videos for guidance, bought all the necessary fertilizers and pest sprays from ACE Hardware, yet end up with wilted leaves and branches that made the journey fruitless?

Alternatively, do you want to start a fish farm for your own consumption or for business?

Do you know that you can do both? Or at least learn how from just one place—the Cooperative Research, Extension, and Education Services of the Northern Marianas College. Just head to NMC

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CREES and look for extension agent and program lead Michael M. Ogo and he will tell you about aquaculture and its endless possibilities.

"If somebody comes to the office and say, 'I'm interested in planting, but I don't how or I don't want to do it in the soil because my soil is poor in nutrients or has disease causing organism,' I'd tell them, 'Want to try hydroponics or aquaponics?' If they want to go into rearing aquatic animals like fish, we can help them too," he said.

Aquaculture is the cultivation of aquatic animals and plants, including freshwater and marine life for food and other purposes. As Ogo explains it, the technology started in the '40s and the interest stems from an expanding world with increasing supply and demand. especially when it comes to food.

"It is one of the fastest growing food production sectors in the past 10 years. It is growing at a rate of 8% annually," he added.

Aquaculture is an umbrella term that includes mariculture, which involves the cultivation of marine organisms for food and other products in the open ocean or offshore aquaculture, an enclosed section of the ocean, or in tanks or ponds that are filled with seawater; hydrophonics, which is a method of food production where plants are grown in water without soil with the help of inorganic fertilizers; and aquaphonics, a method where plants are grown using wastewater from freshwater fish culture tanks.

Ogo said aquaculture is particularly apt for the CNMI as it helps with food security and is a viable alternative to importation, both for private and commercial consumption. "…This is not unique to the CNMI as a lot of island nations tend to import a lot of things and *force majeure* can basically disrupt the supply chain. So what are we going to do when the airplanes stop coming? We have to be self-sufficient," he said.

When NMC teacher Ajani Burrell wanted to get started with hydrophonics, he knew exactly where to get some guidance. "They were very helpful… and made several visits to my place to help me learn the ropes. I got into it because we had a hard time regularly finding fresh leafy greens on island. The leafy greens were either flown in from the mainland or were only sporadically available from local producers," he said.

"Finding materials is pretty straightforward. Lumber and other building materials are mostly available on island. Seeds and nutrients can be ordered online and shipped to the CNMI and I recommend it. The method I employ (Kratky) is a passive method that requires no pumps or electricity. I built a small screened structure to keep most of the pests out. Once I get a batch of seeds in solution, I basically can leave them alone for 5-7 weeks and then harvest when they're ready. Now, we always have leafy greens to eat!" he added

Aside from giving technical advice, the bulk of Ogo's work has to do with commercial industries and helping smaller producers scale up to be able to provide more for the community. "We are currently working with one commercial establishment that just

CREES is located at the Northern Marianas College compound. For more information, you can contact Michael M. Ogo at 670-2376847 or email: michael.ogo@marianas.edu.

CREES extension agent/program leader Michael M. Ogo stands beside an aquaculture-tank where they are trying to raise skipjacks.

recently started and we are helping them produce certain ingredients that they require for that business. …We are actually instrumental in opening Saipan Aquaculture Co. Inc. back in 2004 and 2005 and it got to the point where they were producing shrimps for the island, exporting some to the military bases in Guam…and they were exporting to other parts of the world, mainly Asia," he said.

"We've got two fish farmers that are currently producing *tilapia* and sell to the community. …One just recently opened and we have been helping them. …Our main focus is actually to provide knowledge, technical assistance in this format so that businesses can minimize the losses that can happen if you're going to start something via trial and error," he added.

With the CNMI heavily dependent on the importation of food and other needs, this places the Commonwealth at a disadvantage when the supply chain is disrupted by weather disruption, calamities, etc. That's where aquaculture could come in and supplement the local food supply.

Right now, the CNMI import somewhere between 85 to 95% of its food, said CREES interim dean Patricia Coleman, ironically even fish products that are already available locally. "This puts us in a very vulnerable situation, like when there is a war that might disrupt shipment, storms, and now the pandemic. So, aquaculture is another reason why we are developing this industry," she said.

Plus, people who know how to grow, raise and harvest their own food is a fundamental life skill and that used to be a common practice that has been eroded over time by the increasing amount of products being flown into the Commonwealth.

"Historically, food production locally and the community's capacity to feel confident growing, raising, and harvesting their own food has diminished in just a few decades due to the imports coming in. Interesting to ask 'What has happened to our ability to do that?'" Coleman said.

With all of the research, technical skills, and knowledge that CREES can provide, Coleman said one of their goals is to reduce dependence on imported products by at least 5%. "It sounds relatively small but that's a big deal for us. ...We are aware of laws and policies that dictate shipment prices and the subsidies [that] make it very favorable to export food rather than to produce food locally, so there's a lot of challenges associated with it," she said.

Coleman pointed out that reducing one's reliance on imported food has been done in other countries that put significant amount of resources into it, like Singapore, which does a lot of indoor agriculture, and the United Arab Emirates, which has put up a multimillion indoor facility so they could grow food for catering to a specific airline.

"…These countries have made huge investments and big policy changes to make those conditions favorable. …If we could get 5% off the market, to have the food grown or produced locally, that would be a big deal for the CNMI," she added.

In February this year, NMC was awarded a grant of $13.2-million by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration to develop the colleges' CREES program further and its role in supporting regional economic development. "Our vision is we want to see a lot of farms on the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, including other islands in the Northern Marianas. First, we produce for local consumption and, if we produce enough, then maybe we can export to other places and even to the West Coast in the U.S. mainland," Ogo said.

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NMI MUSEUM

It's not just for tourists, you know

JOSHUASANTOS
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TAGA *Plus* Contributing Writer

For the NMI Museum, which is heavily dependent on visits from tourists and history buffs for business, the COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating—the absence of visitors rendering void the museum's reason for being, which is to educate visitors with highlights from the CNMI's culture and history.

"It was dead. Nobody wanted to go out," said museum docent Archie Ajoste.

COVID-19 affected the economy, leaving much uncertainty in the fate of the museum's operations.

In October 2020, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres hired Archie Ajoste to fill the position that was vacated by John Apatang Reyes, who

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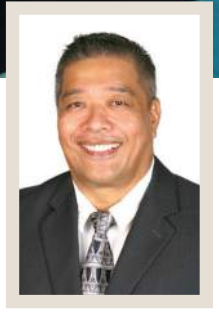
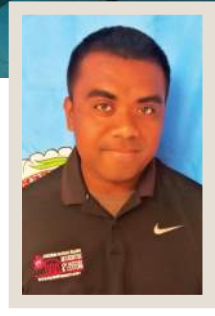


Daniel I. Aquino Jr.
Executive Director

James I. Macaranas
Facilities & Building Manager

Archie P. Ajoste
Administrative Assistant/ Certified Docent



Wenny Haruo
Office Assistant

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Agape Christian School students looki at ancient Chamorro pottery shards that date back to 2,000-4,000 years ago.

NMC Teacher Summer Program participants look at the old Garapan map with streets and buildings from '30s during the Japanese era.

Center for Independent Living staff listen to NMI Museum docent Archie Ajoste on the arrival of the Spaniards and Carolinians to the islands.

Archie Ajoste leads a tour for members of the Center for Independent Living during their visitation of the museum in April.

Saipan Community School students look through ancient Chamorro fishing equipment, tools, and jewelry made from sea snail shells, oyster shells, and clam shells.

Archie Ajoste guides members of the Center for Independent Living through a display during their visitation of the museum in April.

Summer students being hosted by the Indigenous Affairs Office (Inafa'molek Manhoben Marianas) listen to NMI Museum docent Archie Ajoste talk about the CNMI's German period from 1899-1914.

Participants of the first session of the Mother's Day Paint Night on May 6 pose for a photo. The NMI Museum's Archie Ajoste worked closely with the Women's Affairs Office for them to hold the event at the museum.

Participants of the second session of the Mother's Day Paint Night on May 7 pose for a photo. The NMI Museum's Archie Ajoste worked closely with the Women's Affairs Office for them to hold the event at the museum.

left for Arizona to further his education. NMI Museum executive director Danny Aquino then met with newly hired Ajoste to brainstorm plans to increase capacity, awareness, and attract a bigger audience from local residents.

Ajoste's first task was to reinforce the museum's partnership with the public schools to arrange for field trips, but parents' concerns were still high, and these first talks did not go anywhere. However, as the world began to show a semblance of an understanding of the virus around December, people slowly started going out again, with masks on and hand sanitizer at the ready. It was at this time that Ajoste helped arrange a Christmas Tree Competition on museum grounds and saw a decent turnout. Nine groups made of private schools and nonprofit organizations participated, and the event was able to secure sponsorships to the tune of around $2,100 and hundreds of dollars in prizes. Ajoste said the event raised more than he expected, giving first placer Loving Hands Daycare $1,000, second place $500, plus prizes, and third place downward of $200, plus prizes.

In the early part of 2021, Building and Facilities manager James Macaranas and Ajoste worked closely together to dedicate this period of visitor downtime to doing much-needed repairs to the museum itself.

In April and May, various improvement projects were greenlit. During this period, the museum received non-skid coating on its outdoor walkways, upgraded LED lighting inside and outside the museum, and a coat of elastomeric paint on the roof to better repel heat and keep the museum and its artifacts safeguarded from possible leaks and cool.

With these improvements to the museum either nearing completion or completed, Aquino and Ajoste turned their focus toward improving the museum-going experience, particularly for the youth. Ajoste saw a need for tablets and audio guides, like one seen in larger museums elsewhere, to keep visitors—younger visitors especially—engaged with the exhibits. "I really need those for the kids to interact. I can't give an in-

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depth tour, or like an educational tour to those young ages. They need something more digital to learn about history and culture," said Ajoste.

When TAGA *Plus* sat down with Ajoste for an interview on June 4, a whiteboard was behind him. At the time of the interview, it was filled with scheduled museum visits and event dates for the upcoming months. It was not too long ago when that whiteboard was blank, and it was the glossy, plastic canvas staring back at Ajoste that motivated him to do something and get people back into the museum.

"We really want guests to come in, we want to double our visitors. There [are] guests coming in, but it's nowhere like before. It's like half from before, so I pushed myself to get in contact with all the summer programs on the island," he said.

Ajoste has already conducted a tour for Saipan Community School students in February, tours for the Center for Independent Living and Agape Christian School students in April, worked with the Women's Affairs Office to hold a Mother's Day Paint Nights on May 6 and 7, and was able to schedule seven upcoming events for the summer, in addition to weekly visits from multiple public schools in July. A new event at the museum was Pride Marianas Youth's Pride at the Park last June 18.

"We have the Division of Coastal Resources Management coming in, we have the Indigenous Affairs Office coming in, PSS are coming in. And [Northern Marianas College staff]," said Ajoste.

To make the museum even more accessible to the community, the museum's executive director will be constructing 14 tin huts over the 14 concrete foundations that are spread throughout the museum's grounds. The plan is to generate revenue by having interested businesses rent the huts for events similar to the Chamorro Village Market in Guam or the Thursday night Street Market at the Garapan Fishing Base.

The ultimate goal is to create more foot traffic for the museum. "We're trying to have something in the museum so that we have a lot of traffic here so we can expose the museum," Ajoste said.

He credits his success in promoting the museum to having a supportive museum team who are like family and Torres who gave him the opportunity to work at the museum.

As for suggestions for the museum to be open on Saturdays, that's already being done. "We were getting suggestions to open on Saturdays, because many people work from Monday to Friday and can't come in during those times. We're now open on Saturdays too. We're trying to make [opening on Saturdays] permanent because of schools. If the school can't come, the parents can bring their kids on Saturdays," said Ajoste. "I hope you guys check out the museum. It's a good place to de-stress. ...I'm giving the tours, whether in-depth or simple depending on the guest's ages."

Aquino thanks his entire staff (Macaranas, Ajoste, and Wenny Haruo) for their dedication and hard work. He also thanks Torres for the excellent addition of Ajoste to the museum. "Mr. Ajoste has demonstrated professionalism, initiative and a person who loves his job and works extremely hard. We all do," added Aquino.

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Thomas Manglona II delivers the news in Guam at KUAM News.

Anatomy of a newsmaker:

Thomas Mangloña II

IVAMAURIN
TAGA *Plus* Contributing Writer

Imagine being in a tense middle school PTA meeting, a student comes to you, hands over a homemade business card, and then asks to interview you. You check him out. Looks like the typical sixth-grader. No big deal, right? You'll just be talking to another student. So you say yes, and then you begin sharing the complaints you have for the school principal. The next morning, you read about it, as a full article, on a blog.

This is how the story began for Thomas Mangloña II.

In sixth grade, he already knew he wanted to be a journalist. Fast forward to 2021, a little over a decade since and with a Harry S. Truman scholarship tucked in his belt, Manglona now holds a master's degree in journalism from the Stanford University in California.

He is a journalist from Rota, born and raised here in the Northern Mariana Islands. From writing blogs as a sixth grader, he progressed to become a writer for both *Marianas Variety* and *Saipan Tribune*, TAGA *Sports* magazine, and the *North Star* weekly publication; for the Pacific News Center; and for KUAM News.

He also worked on the news desk for ABC7 News in San Francisco back in 2018, and is now completing a summer internship at ABC News in New York.

But he is returning home. His goal? To change the landscape of how journalism is, here on the islands.

"I hope to return home to report on a regional level through impactful visual journalism," he said.

Thomas Manglona II graduates from Stanford University in California where he earned his master's degree in Journalism.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

When destiny calls

Mangloña's motivation to be a journalist sprung from frustrations on how under-covered Rota is in the media. "I want to change that and am constantly thinking how to make that more possible every day."

Mangloña started blogging, writing about current events on Rota before he was even a teenager. "For both my undergrad and grad school admission essays, I wrote about how Rota is under-covered by the professional news media. There remains no dedicated news reporter or outlet on island that can serve not only as a watchdog, but also to uplift the good people and their lived experiences."

That drive to tell the stories of the people of Rota did not come from a vacuum. That was also the lament of Manglona's grandfather, Prudencio Mangloña, the first elected mayor of Rota.

"I see my reporting as part of my family's lineage—I feel as though I am answering the call my grandfather made in 1997, one year before I was born." Mangloña was referring to a transcript he recently found—Prudencio Mangloña's response when asked by a researcher on his thoughts on a United Nations visiting mission on the island.

In the transcript, the senior Mangloña is quoted as saying, "Well, it's nice to see important people coming to the island. Very rare to see that. So, at least somebody came. No reporter, no newspaper and no others talked about our problems. … So, at least those concerned about the welfare of the people we could try our best to tell anybody that came here about our problems. We talked about our problems so that they can let other people in the responsible authority know about our suffering here."

Reclaiming heritage

For Mangloña, journalism is a way to reclaim his heritage, where he can rewrite some of the narratives told about CHamoru people, but not by CHamoru people. His favorite stories show the nuance and complexities of its people and islands.

Growing up, his grandparents instilled in him the love for his own community and the environment, and the essence of education—to eventually serve others.

At the University of California at Berkeley, where he earned his B.A. in Media Studies with High Distinction, Mangloña successfully advocated establishing a permanent staff position for Pacific Islander student development with funding for programs. He also helped establish the first Critical Pacific Island Studies Library Guide at the UC Berkeley Ethnic Studies Library.

He also is an active member of the Native American Journalists Association and Asian American Journalists Association where he founded the Pacific Islander Journalism Task Force to advocate for journalists and coverage across Oceania.

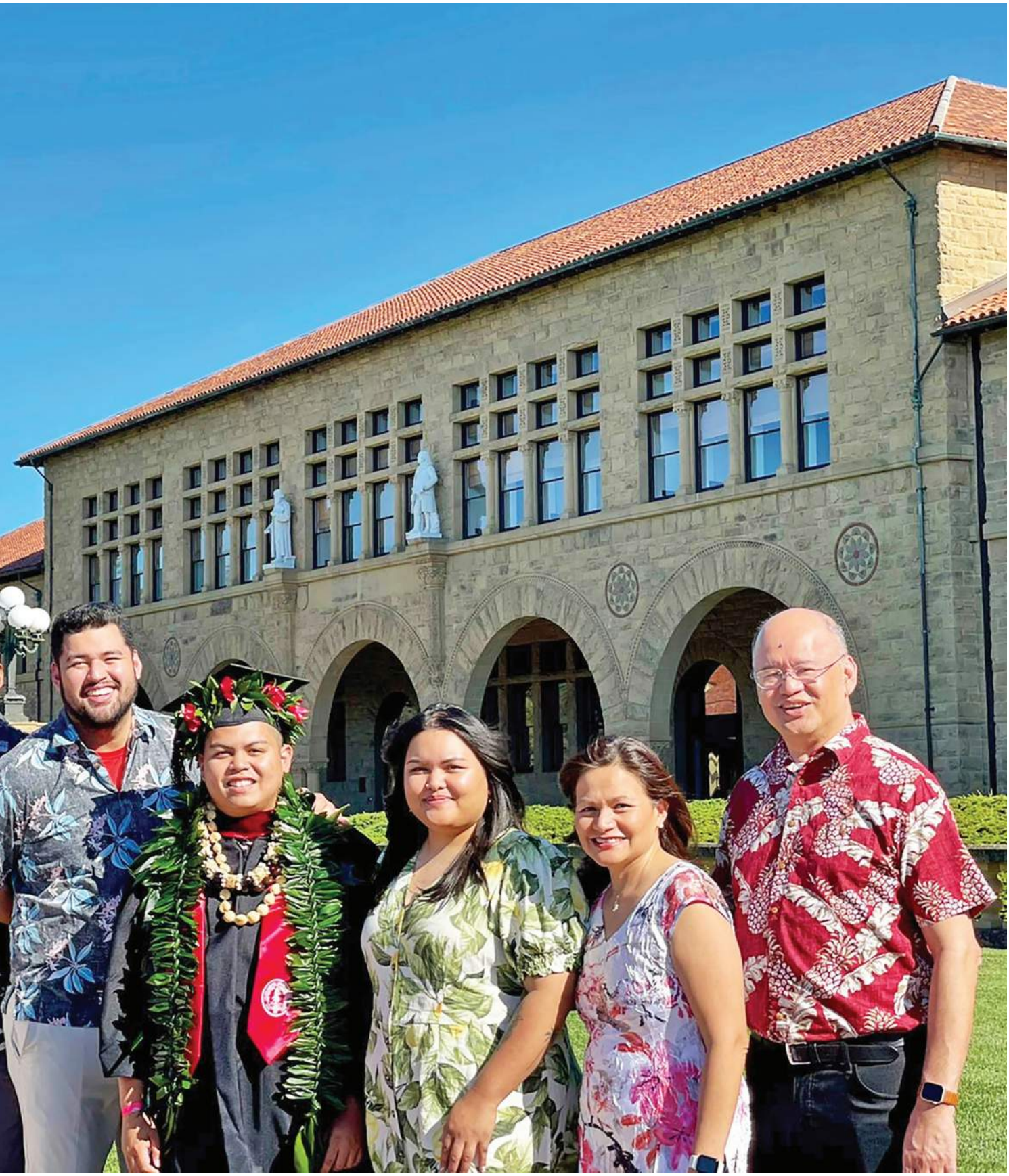
"The journey is not over but marking this moment with my graduate degree in journalism reminds me of why I got into this profession in the first place: to tell the truth, hold institutions accountable, and uplift the goodness of our people."

"It makes being a journalist more fulfilling when the community comes together," Mangloña said, adding that he is most proud of the resilience of, the willingness to speak up, and the care the people of the CNMI have for each other.

He hopes that more youth in the islands would pursue news as a profession.

"It's not for everyone, but if you are curious, passionate about issues, and want to uplift your community those are great motivations to be a journalist. There may not be access to internship programs like other places, but having pencil or phone can take you a long way."

"I enjoy every second of this work. There is nothing else I can see myself doing."



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Thomas Manglona II poses with his family at Stanford University in California where he recently earned his master's degree in Journalism.

PARADISE AT OUR DOORSTEP

6 adventures to have on Rota

The grass is always greener on the other side.

This sentiment certainly rings true when describing Rota (Luta), our friendly neighboring island in the south. At a time when travel is still difficult due to the pandemic—and you've staycationed your heart out on Saipan—Rota feels greener, wilder, lusher, and downright adventurous.

With no restrictions on travel within the CNMI and just a quick and easy 30-minute flight from Saipan, Rota is the perfect destination to combat those pesky feelings of wanderlust. For nature lovers, it's simply paradise. From the turtles sunbathing in the blue-green waters of Sasanhaya Bay to the red-footed boobies soaring along the sheer cliffs of the bird sanctuary, Rota offers peace and tranquility—and the perfect respite from normal life.

"Rota, in my opinion—and I'm sure many others will agree—is such a pristine and untouched part of the CNMI," said Saipan resident Sharlene Sablan, who recently visited Rota on a work trip with her colleagues.

"On top of that, everyone is so welcoming," Sablan said. "It feels like a home away from home. The people are known to be amazing hosts. The food is always good. The island is so lush and the wildlife seems to be thriving. It's peaceful and beautiful. All of these things make it worth checking out."

Rota possesses a unique character and charm that will win you over the moment you land, the Marianas Visitors Authority says. And they are certainly right. You won't pass a car on the main road without receiving a friendly wave. The faded signs that welcome you upon arrival are right on point: "Nature's Treasure Island." Because, often, the only sounds you'll hear are the breaking of the waves, the song of the fruit doves, or a coconut falling to the ground.

Not sure what to do once you're there? Here are six adventures on Rota to help you unwind, reconnect with nature, and see just how green the other side can be.

LINDSAYNASH
TAGA *Plus* Contributing Writer

1 Take a dip in the Swimming Hole

No trip to Rota is complete without a dip in the refreshing and scenic "Swimming Hole" near the Rota Resort & Country Club. Bring a beverage and soak in the cool clear water. Safety tip from the locals: it's time to get out when the water covers all the sand in front of the swimming hole. Need help finding the place? It's actually listed as "Swimming Hole" on Google Maps.

LINDSAY NASH

No trip to Rota is complete without a dip in the refreshing and scenic "Swimming Hole." Here, a group from Saipan enjoy the popular spot.

LINDSAY NASH

2 See the sunset at Songsong Overlook

The village of Songsong on Rota is quite picturesque, but never more so at sunset from the easily accessible overlook above the town. It's an ideal spot to sit along the concrete wall next to the large white cross and watch the sun drop over the western harbor.

The Songsong Overlook is a beautiful spot to catch the sunset with a picturesque view of the village below.

3 Drive and picnic along Rota's "back-island road"

This narrow, four-wheel drive road hugs Rota's southeast coast and will impress you along every bend and curve. You can drive it any time, but consider packing a picnic and starting in the afternoon. The road begins around the Japanese cannon in the south and winds its way northeast through verdant tunnels of jungle and around the awe-inspiring Pona Point (where you can see turtles from the cliffs), by a monstrous-sized nunu (banyan) tree, and above the yawning Alaguan Bay. Stop often. Turn off your car and turn down the music. And just breathe in the beautiful sounds, smells, and feelings of nature.

Rota's back-island road is a scenic 4WD road with many beautiful ocean and jungle vistas along the way.

LINDSAY NASH

4 Go back in time

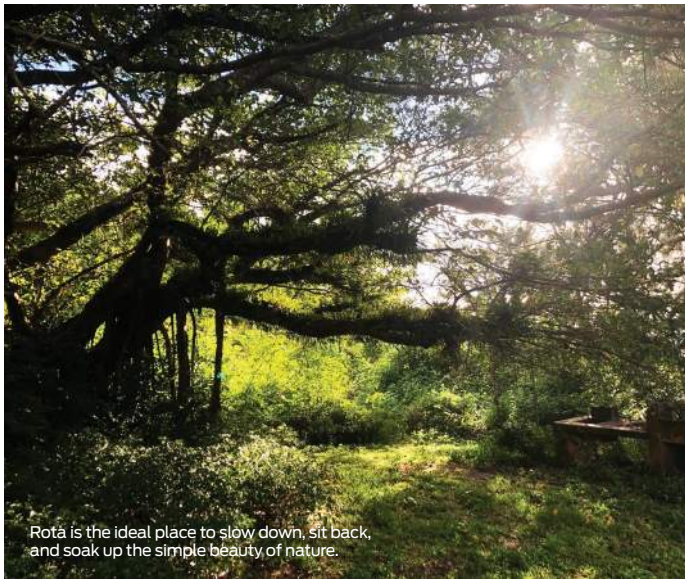
There is a lot of history on Rota and many interesting sites to see it. Start with the near-history and visit the old Japanese sugar mill in Songsong, where part of it still stands next to a pre-World War II railroad locomotive, the only one used for the sugar cane industry still in its traditional location. Then go back much further in time and visit the As Nieves Latte Stone Quarry, which consists of nine huge latte shafts and seven capstones. Another interesting site is the old German chapel, the only remaining structure on Rota dating from the German Period. Constructed in 1912, it's rectangular in shape and made of mompositeria (coral rocks held in place by lime cement).

5 Go birding at Chenchun Bird Sanctuary

If birding sounds boring, this bird sanctuary is here to prove you wrong. This staggeringly beautiful spot atop the limestone cliffs over the Alaguan Bay offers—quite literally–a bird's eye view of the incredible variety of birds who call this area home. The pristine limestone forest below provides nesting areas for kingfishers, boobies, tropic birds, and even the endangered Marianas crow. Amble along the walkways above the sanctuary to watch the birds fly back and forth just below your feet.

LINDSAY NASH

From the turtles sunbathing in Sasanhaya Bay to the red-footed boobies flying soaring in the bird sanctuary, Rota offers peace and tranquility—and the perfect respite from normal life.



LINDSAY NASH

Rota is the ideal place to slow down, sit back, and soak up the simple beauty of nature.

6 Scuba dive in the turquoise waters

Rota, of course, offers more than land-based adventuring. If you'd like to explore the surrounding waters, Rota offers a variety of diving sites featuring wall dives, underwater wrecks, and coral formations. There are currently two dive shops, but both require advanced planning, especially during this slow travel season.

As you can see, there is plenty to keep you busy on Rota. But, it's also a wonderful place to just slow down, sit back, and soak up the simple beauty of nature. Yes, you'll see just how green and lush this beautiful place is. But it'll also make you stop and appreciate all the good things in life, no matter on which side of the fence you reside.

Inspiring future generations of female players

For the first time in the history of CNMI women's football, three players have received athletic scholarships from U.S. colleges.

Marianas High School graduate Katrina Costales is heading to Whitworth University in Washington, while her fellow Dolphins alumni Lilian Podziewski and Stephanie Flores are going to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in New York and Illinois College in Chicago, respectively. All three schools compete in the National Collegiate Athletic Association—the biggest intercollegiate sports organization in the U.S. and a breeding ground for future Olympians and professional players.

Flores, Costales, and Podziewski are proud products of the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association's women's program, which has come a long way since the NMIFA was established 17 years ago. Gone were the days when female players have to compete in co-ed tournaments just to get into the pitch. They are on a league of their own now, paving the way for Flores, Costales, Podziewski, and several others ahead of them to move up to the collegiate ranks and get a chance to play at higher-level competitions and continue their studies at the same time.

Right direction

NMIFA assistant coach Angie Ito said having more female players from the CNMI playing in the collegiate ranks and getting scholarship offers indicates the program is heading in the right direction.

"The NMIFA programs are platforms to create opportunities both for our male and female players. We hope that more and more players use these platforms and take advantage of the opportunities given to them," Ito said.

The Asian Football Confederation C License coach added that they need to continue nurturing and developing NMIFA's grassroots, coach education, and even referee programs to help open more doors of opportunities for players, especially the young ones.

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TAGA *Plus* Staff Writer

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Katrina Costales kicks the ball during one of the games in the Dove Women's Spring League 2021 at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblervile.

Stephanie Flores takes control of the ball during a game in the Dove Women's Spring League 2021 at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblervile.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Motivate other players

NMIFA technical director Michiteru Mita congratulated Costales, Podziewski, and Flores on their acceptance to their respective school's women's soccer program and thanked the three players for being an inspiration to others,

"They grew under our program and their success also encourages other young girls playing football. They showed that if you continue playing football and working hard, you can get a lot of opportunities. Of course, it is not easy, as you must keep up with both football and academics. There's a lot of sacrifices to be made. I hope they will keep working hard and prove that CNMI players can play at the college level so they can continue to inspire our young players," Mita said.

Outstanding student-athletes

Yes, it is possible to stand out both in sports and school.

Flores, Podziewski, and Costales are proving that, managing to juggle their time between school work and football games and earning accolades in both. All three are part of the training squad where members of the CNMI Women's National Team will be selected and they are also among the top players in their respective clubs. Flores suited up with Southern United FC in the last 2021 Spring Dove Women's League, while Podziewski and Costales were with Shirley's FC, which topped Division A of the competition. Flores' Southern United finished second.

A few days after playing in the finals of the spring league, Flores, Podziewski, and Costales celebrated their high school graduation as they graduated with honors. All three graduated in the Top 10 of their classes, with Podziewski, Flores, and Costales ranking No. 4, 6, and 10, respectively.

"The NMIFA is very proud of Lilian, Stephanie, and Katrina for their accomplishments as student-athletes. They showed that hard work pays off, both in athletics and academics, as they have represented the CNMI multiple times in international tournaments and graduated at the top of their class," Ito said. "I look forward to their success in the collegiate ranks and hope that one day they will be back and share their experience and knowledge of the game with the generations to come."

Keep on playing

As they head out of the islands to continue their study and play, Podziewski, Flores, and Costales encourage their teammates and opponents they will leave

Lilian Podziewski scans the pitch first before kicking the ball during a game in the M-League Spring 2021.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

behind to stay committed to the sport.

Podziewski, in inspiring fellow players to keep playing, recalled how she almost quit the sport, as she was always on the bench in her first few years on her team.

"I struggled and almost decided to quit soccer altogether until a friend noticed my 'fighting spirit' on the field and said I should try out for the national team. I didn't think I would make it, but I took the chance and tried out for the team, and I worked hard to improve. Since then, I met new coaches and teammates who encouraged me and made me a better person and player," Podziewski said. "I want to let the younger players know that if they put in the hard work and take the opportunities presented to them, the right people will notice and help them develop."

Costales echoed Podziewski, saying that by staying in the program, the amount of opportunities, support, and experiences made available to them is unimaginable.

Flores thanked all her coaches, teammates, and NMIFA for preparing her for the next journey in her soccer career. "This is another adventure that's pushing me to go further than where I am now," Flores said.

5 family adventures await those eager to explore again

LYNNO'ROURKEHAYES
FamilyTravel.com

Our travel options are expanding. From luxury bucket-list journeys to adventures much closer to home, families are opting to explore once more. If you are among those who are eager to get going, here are five ideas to consider.

THE ULTIMATE AFRICAN ADVENTURE

Return to travel in style with an epic African adventure that combines curated experiences at five Four Seasons properties. The collection includes the Safari Lodge in Serengeti, as well as pool villa resorts in Mauritius, Seychelles and Seychelles at Desroches Island, as well as a luxurious hillside retreat in Johannesburg. To further enhance this once-in-a-lifetime holiday, seamless and stress-free private travel connections are made possible by a recently launched collaboration with ExecuJet charters. Guests can tailor-make their own journey, mixing and matching adrenaline-filled game drives on the Serengeti with dreamy beach days on pristine Desroches Island, resort adventures in the Seychelles, an ocean-front round of golf in Maurititius, and memorable culture and culinary moments in Johannesburg. In honor of the African Collection's debut, special offers and enhanced services are possible.

Contact: www.fourseasons.com/safari-and-islands-collection-africa/

ROAR & SNORE SAFARIS

For something closer to home and less expensive, families can spend the night at the San Diego Zoo's Safari Park. Commune with the critters after hours and get comfortable in the Roar & Snore campground. Families can visit nearby animal areas, join guided walks, take part in a campfire program and look forward to an evening snack and breakfast the next morning. Choose from different tent styles and activities that include flight line tours during which guests soar above rhinos, giraffes and other wildlife in expansive savanna habitats, and outings to catch animal action in the dark via night vision explorations.

A swimming pool and African Safari lodge terrace in Savanna forest Serengeti Grumeti Reserve.

Contact: www.sdzsafaripark.org/safaris/roar-snore-safaris

SUITE STAYS WITH YOUR PETS

Many families adopted pets or deepened an existing bond during our extended time at home. Now, with travel possible again, it may not be comfortable to leave fabulous Fido behind. There is no need. Take advantage of the Lab of Luxury package at the Conrad Washington D.C., where furry guests can check into a Bark View Suite stocked with an Hermes collar and leash, a Tiffany water bowl and homemade gourmet treats. Later, they can expect a chauffeured afternoon with their favorite humans to three dog-friendly wineries. Further south in Atlanta, Waldorf Astoria Atlanta Buckhead spoils canine guests with the "Pawfect Stay" package with custom amenities that include a

A swimming pool and African Safari lodge terrace in Savanna forest Serengeti Grumeti Reserve
DREAMSTIME/TNS

leash, plush bed, meals, a map highlighting dog-friendly parks throughout Atlanta, and a $100 credit to be used toward hotel services.

Contact: https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/wascici-conrad-washington-dc/https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/atlwawa-waldorf-astoria-atlanta-buckhead/gallery/

ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Intrepid Travel, a global tour operator, has recently introduced new sustainable travel experiences in Europe designed to benefit local communities as part of an exclusive partnership with eco-focused MEET Network Association. It's hoped the new community-based travel experiences will help spread the benefits of tourism by taking visitors away from well-known hot spots and introduce a more authentic and unspoiled side of popular destinations. For example, during an upcoming tour, guides will lead travelers to lesser-known corners of Crete, untouched by tourism for an authentic taste of village life. Guests will visit charming coastal villages, learn about the history and customs of the island, dine on local specialties and enjoy live performance of traditional music.

Contact: www.IntrepidTravel.com

DISTANCE DOESN'T MATTER

If you and your family are not quite ready to expand your travel horizons, consider what adventures you might uncover close to home. What can you discover within a day's drive of your own backyard? Are there cities or small towns you've longed to visit? National or state parks you've put on your "later" list? Are there rivers to float, mountains to climb or gardens to appreciate? Has a new resort or water park recently opened? How about backcountry cabins you might find intriguing? Carefully comb through the possibilities and choose one or more options inside your comfort zone.

JOEL BUCO

Saipan's fastest man on two wheels

Joel Buco arrived on Saipan in 2017 and proceeded to win every conceivable bike race on island, making himself the island's undisputed fastest man on two wheels.

The 48-year-old The Water Company employee has won the 100-kilometer Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle Race thrice and also triumphed in the most recent bike competitions this year—the Saipan Unity Lions Club 5th Annual Bike Race and the Emon Masonic Lodge 179 inaugural Padyakan Sa Saipan.

Buco, who hails from the Philippines, said he first discovered his passion for biking while growing up in his hometown of Talavera, Nueva Ecija.

In more than 30 years of pedaling, this father of three said the toughest race he's taken part of was a 250-km race from Pangasinan province to Baguio City in the Philippines in 1994 that snaked through the grueling and almost never-ending ascent of the Marcos Highway.

"I remember I felt cramps all over my body because that race was really hard. I only finished fourth place because a lot of professional cyclists took part in the race compared to me who was just starting back then," Buco said in Tagalog.

On Saipan, Buco finds the Hell of Marianas as the most challenging. In terms of prize money, he said the most rewarding so far has been the Tour of Tinian in 2019, where he pocketed $500. He also earned $300 for pedaling to triumph in the 2019 Hell of the Marianas.

More than the money, Buco said cycling also has a lot of health benefits. "It keeps you from having unhealthy vices like smoking and excessive drinking of alcohol because you always need to be in condition," he said, adding that his hobby is a perfect stress-reliever.

Buco said all his victories are always dedicated to his wife, Mary Jane, and their three children—Jomari, Justine, and Joshua.

To keep himself in tip-top-shape so he could always participate for the islands' cycling races, Buco trains four times a week—three 60-km bike runs on weekdays and a killer 100-km bike run on the weekend.

His advice to anyone planning to take up cycling? First, you have to have determination. Second, you would have to avoid smoking and alcohol so you will maintain strong lungs, heart, and body. And third, cycling encourages you to train a lot so you can tackle the small climbs and even hills on your route.

"The sport of cycling is good for your health and make you stay away from unhealthy vices and habits. You also gain quite a good number of friends along the way," he said.

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Tales of a clueless housewife

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The one about the deadly bathroom cleaner

Let me tell you all about the time I nearly killed myself trying to clean our bathroom with hydrochloric acid, more commonly known as muriatic acid.

Before I go on, I have to explain. I have lived with my parents my whole life so my parents did almost everything for me in the 20-plus years that I lived with them, so you would understand why I have never cleaned a bathroom in my life. Until I got married, of course.

The day we moved into our first actual apartment was the day I nearly killed myself from acid inhalation, and let me explain how.

Around the time we were moving into our first actual apartment as a married couple, my husband was working crazy hours and on weekends, too, so the task of cleaning the apartment before we moved in was left to me.

For those who don't know my husband, if there is one thing he is anal about, it's restrooms, specifically toilets (no pun intended!). It makes sense because he spends hours in it. If he had the time, he would've cleaned the restroom himself but we had to move in right away and he didn't have the time so I was the only option.

Assuming I was a rookie in cleaning and disinfecting restrooms, my husband bought all the cleaning supplies I needed and tried to explain how to use each one but me, not wanting to feel like I was some helpless girl who didn't know how to clean a simple restroom, said, "I know, I got it, I know what to do." I, in fact, did not know what to do but I figured there must be some video lurking on YouTube that I could watch first and be my saving grace!

Early the next morning, after dropping my husband off at work, I set out to tackle our new apartment restroom.

You remember how I didn't want to listen to explanations? Well, he apparently tried to explain that, when using muriatic acid, it's extremely important to dilute the mixture and to use it in a well-ventilated area.

You can probably guess now what I did. I sprinkled the entire bottle around the restroom, no water included. I poured it on the toilet, the floors, the shower. I basically made it rain muriatic acid. To top it off, I closed the door while doing so because I wanted it concentrated and didn't want the cleaner getting out. In my head, I was planning to use it like Pine-Sol—I was going to pour it on the areas that needed disinfecting, I was going to scrub, and then wash it off with water. Easy.

I kid you not, less than a minute later, the entire room was filled with smoke and I couldn't breathe! I was shocked and confused. The thoughts racing through my mind were, "What is going on? Is there a fire? Why is there so much smoke?"

As I was gathering my thoughts I started to feel tightness in my chest, it was getting hard to breathe, my vision was getting blurry, and I was coughing like I was going to cough up a lung.

Before I completely lost consciousness, I managed to open the restroom door and free myself from the fumes of the acid.

I watched as the smoke grew bigger and bigger, and, as I watched, I thought, "They should put instructions on the bottle," but who was I kidding? I wasn't going to read it anyway.

After telling my husband the events of that day, he had no choice but to go clean the restroom himself at around 10pm that night. He cleaned the entire bathroom himself while I sat and watched for moral support.

That was the day my husband realized that he'd be cleaning our bathroom for the rest of our lives together.

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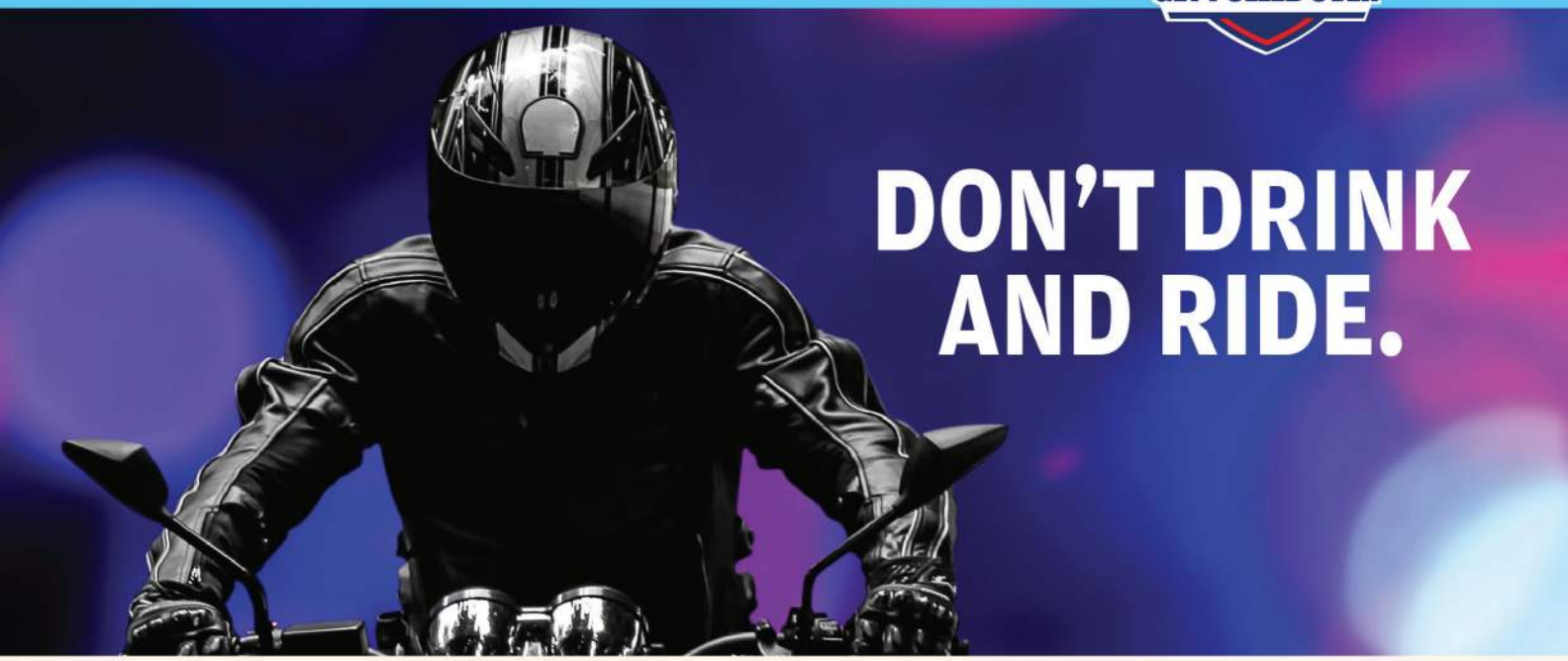

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